

WALTER CLARK AND DAVE HALL
MARCH 1989
CHINCOTEAGUE, VIRGINIA

[The two men are talking and getting into an automobile. Doors shutting, engine ignition sounds are heard.]

MR. CLARK: I'll tell you somebody else that shot a lot of ducks; old Stewart. Do you remember that heavysset fellow?

MR. HALL: Yeah.

MR. CLARK: Damn right! All them kids liked him! All of them.

MR. HALL: Well Charlie Noble really wasn't bad, was he?

MR. CLARK: No, my brother John was working over here at that time with Charlie Noble. John bragged on him. Of course, John never was much of a hunter. The only time he ever hunted was once in a while before [unintelligible place name] got tore up like it is now.

MR. HALL: Where are his twin boys now?

MR. CLARK: Raymond's got one of the best paying damn jobs I guess there is; he works up there to Wilmington. He's a night man. The last I heard they got \$22.50 a hour. He put a suggestion in the suggestion box up there and he got a \$12,500.00 bonus!

MR. CLARK: Damn!

MR. CLARK: He sets right there and keeps these computers checked, that paints cars. And he's the night man. Now John, he lives up around Georgetown and he's working construction work. I think he's doing right good. Allen, the youngest boy, he's built a lot of homes and townhouses here on the island. He's a carpenter. He's done real good.

MR. HALL: Yeah, I liked those boys.

MR. CLARK: If you remember Allen, he was the baby. Boy, I like some of the boys that works here. See? Some come here that I ain't got a thing to do with. But boy, I thought something of Dennis Holland. Hell, I liked old man Appel all right, and his wife. I don't give a damn where she saw you, man if she ever knowd you, that was it! She's holler at you across the street in the damn town! I always done alright with Mr. Appel. I used to talk with him. He'd come up and talk with me and Dennis, every time he'd see me. Sometimes people come here and feed the deer. They love that to death. It looks

like a damn sin though, thinking about it; to come over here and shoot them. I can see a man coming over here and getting one to eat, but damn, and be sure that he killed him. Listen, I had a K-22 Masterpiece. I had a shoulder holster. How many deer you think I killed with her? They never would've had time to get away from me. I never would take a shot unless I was positive. I killed eight deer with her. For to eat now! And I killed some up there on Mills Isle; them old while fallow deer. You wouldn't believe. You wouldn't believe it! Look; I heard this rattling in these dead Myrtle bushes as I was walking along the path. I hauled her out. She had a 6-inch barrel. I laid my hand up like that. I was a right good shot with her; not bragging because I could shoot a gull right out the air with her. I laid her up there and all I seen was them first two eye tags. He rattled his antlers in them Myrtle bushes. I took her back down and looked at him again. And when I shot him, I shot for his heart. That ball struck a rib and mushroomed. Two pieces spread off and went up his rib and cut his damn spine.

MR. HALL: How do those fallow deer eat? I've never eaten one of them?

MR. CLARK: Oh son, they were.... Listen, I can't understand it, cause I had shot wild turkeys. I had shot three wild turkeys with that pistol. I killed them to eat. I didn't go up there like some of them boys. Them boys went up there and messed it up. They went up there and shot them and sold them. I've eat the pea fowl off of there. Three hen turkeys. I was on a hill and they were running down under this Cedar in the shade. And the fourth one, I got the fourth one. I guess I was over shooting. The fourth one was peahen. They had some chickens. Somebody had turned them loose on there. They were game chickens; gamecocks. And somebody had carried some dunhills over there later on, well that ruined them. I was up there one day and it was a great big Willow tree with a low fork in it. It was a bunch of roosters. It was mostly all roosters. There were a lot of pullets but you couldn't eat them. The hide was off of their backs and thighs because of the roosters. I laid her up in that in that tree and when I cocked her I shot five goddamned roosters! Right under one wing and right out the other! But the deer, the peafowl the turkeys and anything that was shot and killed on there had a flavor; I don't know what it was, but every one had that same damned flavor! The fowl and the deer too; they were damn good! They were good. You wouldn't believe it. There was an ass load of fox squirrels. I was telling you last night about them squirrels. I mean big ones! I told them boys they were the biggest goddamned fox squirrels I ever seen! They were tame. See? Nobody shot them or nothing! Hell, I didn't shoot them because I'd just as well eat a damn door hinge as eat a squirrel. He's so tough! They built nice big nests in the old oak trees. There was plenty of them.

MR. HALL: Do you want something to eat or drink?

MR. CLARK: No. Well, I'll take a Pepsi or a Coke; whatever they got. I don't want nothing else.

[Mr. Hall places an order at McDonald's drive through.]

MR. CLARK: I carried them roosters home, picked them and cooked them. Dave, there was some while Chinese Geese up there. Them boys shot them and it was a damned shame. They shot them in a cove on the western side of that island, and Taylor's Landing was across this big cove on the mainland. They shot them geese so damn much when they heard a outboard motor coming they'd start swimming across there for the mainland as hard as they could go. That was a damn shame!

MR. HALL: They really hit them a licking?

MR. CLARK: It was a real shame. They were kids. They weren't grown up. They were boys just getting ready to start out.

[Mr. Hall's order and Mr. Clark's drink come.]

MR. HALL: I got right thirsty out there!

MR. CLARK: How many straws did you get?

MR. HALL: Here's one, I don't use them.

MR. CLARK: I'd better, or I'll poor this down my neck!

MR. HALL: Boy, there's some people that come over here now don't they?

MR. CLARK: Yeah. On this island, they don't help that many people. They hurt people like me because when you go to the store; if I go to buy anything. It hurts people like me. And it's a very damn few that makes a big load out of it. And it ruined that Wildlife Refuge in a way. In a way it did. It's a damn shame. And it's like we've been talking about last night and today; they better get their s--- together on this environmental and wildlife stuff. I've got a book at home that Dave Bryant wrote about the American Indian; *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. I don't know whether you've ever read it or not. But it's one of the greatest books of history on Indians ever wrote. It was a number one, best seller for a long time. I've read up on history and geography. I used to love it when I was a kid. It was so damn many Buffalo that them Indian tribes thought that when they started migrating and following the grass that they had come up out of a hole in the ground! Now this was from Great Slave Lake, from the east coast to the west coast. They were not too thick on the east coast, and not too thick down in Mexico. But from Great Slave Lake, near the Arctic Circle to Mexico City from the east coast to the west coast. And they claimed it was anywhere from sixty million to one billion. I imagine it was more than that!

MR. HALL: Probably was!

MR. CLARK: It's just like them damn Passenger Pigeons. They were so thick when they were migrating and they'd pitch in a stand of pines and stuff, it would be so many of them it would break the limbs off! They'd fly across and get between the sun.... There was billions of them! Every damn one is gone. The last one died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. Boy, that's a damn shame.

I was down at this damn reformatory. They had a nice library, but they were old books, by all these explorers, and other writers. I read every [expletive] book in that library! Every damn one of them! I liked to read anyhow. I'd go down to that firehouse and if I didn't have nothing to do I'd read five hardback books a week. I read all the books that Stewart Pole wrote. And they had some of these old boys in there from the 1920's about these explorers, and about these different kinds of birds and stuff. They had an encyclopedia. I believe it would be all you could do to lift. It was up on a podium or a pulpit like a preacher has. You'd go there and turn the page. That was the biggest damn book I ever saw. They claimed... I forget what year it was but they had counted two hundred and fifty some of them doves, those Passenger Pigeons in New York State. You know what they should have done? They should have trapped them. They'd have saved them if they had trapped them. Because you can breed them. I've taken young turtledoves out of the nest; they had pinfeathers. I'd take pigeon feed and cup it in my hand and get his beak up in there. I'd feed him and raise him. I've had some of them Ring necked Doves too. I crossed them with these turtledoves. I got the funniest looking damn doves you ever seen. I've had them to lay in February when snow was on the ground.

MR. HALL: Is that right?

MR. CLARK: Yes sir! And I've had them out their in my horse pasture last dove season past, a year ago, the first of September I had squabs in the next. And this year the fifteenth of October, I had squabs in the nest! She's been building in this old robin next. It was a robin nest to start with originally. And she's been building in there. I guess it's the same pair, in that same nest for about five years!

MR. HALL: I'll be damned! Cigar was telling me the damned land on here is as high as it is in New York almost.

MR. CLARK: Look; that little piece of land I bought there in 1964 for fifteen hundred dollars. I sold my house and land down the eastern side to Duane Williams, one of Jim Williams' boys. He wanted it. Me and him is good friends. When I bought that land I paid fifteen hundred dollars for it. Land started going up in about 1964 or in about 1967. It was still low in 1964. At the time Harvey Mears, he was buying up a little bit of land. He had the contract for grass cutting and all that. He come back there and looked all

around and asked me how much a paid for it. I told him fifteen thousand for an acre and a half. What are we going to do with all of that money? Me and the old woman has been living there....we got married in 1939. If we live to see November 4th we'll have been married for fifty years! And if I was to sell that, I'd have to buy somewheres else! And I'd have to leave the island. Are you going inside?

MR. HALL: Yeah, I'll walk in here. Taxes eat you up here? Are the getting higher and higher?

MR. CLARK: No! Look, I am off of the main road. There's four hundred and sixty some feet down that dirt lane before you get to my house. My land runs from where Old Man Jim's house is, from the lane to the Cemetery. I'm off of the beaten path and I got a mobile home. I bought the mobile home in 1965. I moved it back there and sold the house to Duane. I've got an old out building out there and all of the grass that's cut is right around the house. The rest is just when we were along the beach there. There's honeysuckle and all that stuff. Charles asked me why I didn't clean all that out back there under them trees and get you a riding mover and cut it. I said, yeah, and when the man comes back there to assess my property with all those pretty trees and all of that green lawn, wouldn't that be something? I can't kick at all at what I'm paying now. I don't know what I'll have to pay later on, but I can't kick at it now! Some of them people out along the street are hurting.